

Parks Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 08, 2013
6:00 p.m., Council Chambers



City of South Haven

1. Call to Order by Lewis at 6:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present: Cobbs, Comeau, Fitzgibbon, Toneman, Lewis
Absent: Fenske

Also present: Brandy Gildea, Parks & Recreation Supervisor; Ron Dotson, Operations Manager

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Toneman, second by Cobbs to approve the agenda with exception of Item 7.

All in favor. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes – December 11, 2012

Motion by Fitzgibbon, second by Cobbs to approve the December 11, 2012 regular meeting minutes as written.

All in favor. Motion carried.

5. Public Comments and Inquiries Concerning Items not on the Agenda

J. Fitzer, 24 ½ Grand Boulevard. Had question regarding the playground at North Beach.

Gildea explained that the plan is to have the playground installed before Memorial Day.

Diane Landry. 808 Superior Street. Wondered if there could be a playground in the Hartmann Park, since from Superior Street people walking to Kids Corner or the Tot Lot have to cross busy streets without traffic signals.

Gildea asked the Commission if they want to bring the issue of a playground in Hartmann Park back; put together a Master Plan; have public hearings, etc.

After discussion, Gildea said the issue could be discussed at either the February or March meeting; Gildea will send out a letter to Commissioners regarding the issue of a playground at Hartmann Park.

Toneman requested that Gildea include her recommendation on the subject of placing a playground in Hartmann Park when she sends out a letter to the Commission.

6. Optimist Tot Lot – Fencing

In response to a question by Fitzgibbon Gildea said the fence was a city suggestion in response to neighborhood concerns.

Catherine Forsyth, 234 Bailey Avenue. Voiced her concern of safety getting to the park as opposed to safety after arriving at the park. Forsythe recommended signage; there is a very small sign for the park, but by the cemetery there is a huge sign. Noted there are no speed limit signs in the general area of the park.

Lewis stated the park should be fenced on all four sides if it is going to guard from dangers from the ravine.

Ken Stephens, 1070 E. Wilson Street. Does not think the fence is necessary; views a fence as a potential litter trap. Noted that it is unknown whether there is a need of a fence due to increased traffic; the verdict is still out on whether there will be traffic calming measures on Wilson Street. Noted that he understands the City Manager wants to wait until development is complete so there is an idea of whether increased traffic is going to be a problem; Stevens feels that is a fiscally conservative approach. Stevens noted that many neighbors, not all, are not interested in having a fence. Thanked the Parks Commission but said, "No thanks".

Lewis reiterated that he hears that Stevens agrees with the "wait and see" approach to which Stevens responded affirmatively.

Dorothy Appleyard. 806 Wilson Street. Noted that she is among the few who believe a decorative fence, "Not a chain link fence, please." would be an asset to the park. Noted that when they visit their children live in Oak Park, Illinois, which is a city about the size of South Haven, there are many small corner parks and they are fenced. Stated that If litter became a problem, the neighborhood should take care of it. Thinks a fence would be helpful for safety issues; the Tot Lot is used by quite small children who might chase a ball into the street. Appleyard supports a fence.

Lewis asked whether fences provide an issue with litter.

Dotson said they do; the Tot Lot gets a great amount of leaves in that area; city crews already spend numerous days cleaning leaves up in that area and a fence will be a little bit of an issue. Noted that the city would still clean up the leaves, the crews just may need to make a few changes in how they handle leaf removal. Dotson said the city does not know about the traffic yet, and that is not our topic tonight, but this park is close to the road and a fence is a good thing to think about.

Lewis stated that the city should wait until it is known what is going on as far as development on Blue Star and impact on traffic is concerned.

Toneman asked if park safety was discussed in the Parks Commission's 5-year plan. Gildea said it is a high priority to look at; however, if safety becomes an issue there or in any other park, safety in the parks will be number one.

Fitzgibbon noted that several of our parks are not fenced and the city should consider all parks. Fitzgibbon said adding signs near the Tot Lot sounds like a good idea. Dotson noted that signage can be looked into asap (as soon as possible) and staff can order and install signage in a 30-day time frame.

Comeau stated that this discussion is way too premature; if this is a safety issue, the Commission needs to get our police in here to tell us how many accidents there have been with children and cars around the parks. Noted that there is surely more traffic at Kids Corner next to Monroe Boulevard. Once you build a fence in one park you assume liability. This is way too premature. There are many more safety issues that need to be addressed before the Tot Lot gets a fence.

Dorothy Appleyard asked what the cost would be to install a fence at the Tot Lot to which Gildea responded \$15,000. Appleyard said according to something she read recently the city is spending \$350,000 on improvements at Elkenburg Park and the cost of a fence for the Tot Lot seems like a small issue. There are safety issues at Kids Corner and at other parks; thinks that the city systematically needs to add fences.

Lewis stated that in his opinion children will not run into the street at Kids' Corner as readily as they would at the Tot Lot because children know Monroe Boulevard has a lot of traffic.

Forsythe addressed the chairman and the Commission at the microphone without getting permission to speak, stating in an extremely loud voice that Lewis' comment was ridiculous and that all the neighborhood is asking about is to have buffers for the children around the park.

Motion by Fitzgibbon to table this discussion until we see what development brings. Fitzgibbon can not see spending \$15,000 for a "what if?" She understands the feeling of "not in my backyard" and stated that the City plans to do what they can to take care of traffic issues. Second by Toneman to table discussion until after development has happened.

All in favor. Motion carried.

7. Adjourn

Motion by Fitzgibbon, second by Toneman to adjourn at 6:37 p.m.

All in favor. Motion carried.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary